
Book Reviews

***Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia**

P. D. WALZER

London: Marcel Dekker, 1993, 744 pages

Given that it is confined to discussion of *Pneumocystis carinii* pneumonia, one is immediately impressed by the size of this text for which 42 predominantly U.S.A.-based authors have written 31 chapters filling well over 600 pages. Initial chapters cover in detail the morphology, biochemistry, *in vitro* cultivation and genetic aspects of *P. carinii*. Subsequent chapters discuss clinical, pathological, and radiological features as well as treatment. On the basis of its scope, detailed discussion and a large number of references, generally between 50 and 100 for each chapter, the book fulfils its aim to be a reference text but is let down by a disappointingly scant subject index and absence of histological figures in colour.

There is, inevitably for a multiple-author book, disagreement between chapters. For instance, whereas it is stated in one chapter that *P. carinii* pneumonia results from reactivation in immunocompromised individuals following primary infection early in life, another chapter provides convincing evidence that pneumonia results from reinfection, on the basis that the most sensitive techniques do not detect the organism at post mortem of immunocompetent subjects. In favour of this text and of particular relevance to respiratory physicians, is the in-depth and extensively referenced discussion of methods of diagnosis, and treatment options. On this basis, the book might be regarded as essential for clinicians specializing in HIV infection, and a useful library reference for respiratory physicians with an interest.

S. Lozewicz

Clinical development of drugs against asthma

Society of Pharmaceutical Medicine: Expert Panel Report,

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This issue reports the outcome of the deliberations by the expert panel on Clinical Development of Drugs Against Asthma. Their objective was to present proposals for the efficient clinical develop-

ment of drugs to treat asthma, concentrating on the clinical rather than non-clinical studies. The report is arranged in sections, beginning with pre-clinical pharmacology, continuing with the clinical trial design for bronchodilator drugs and disease-modifying drugs, and ending with sections on special patient groups, statistics, compliance and ethical considerations. An appendix contains a specimen clinical trial protocol.

The report is well written and comprehensive, with relevant references at the end of each section, for further reading. The sections on inhaled drug delivery and efficacy (section 5) and equivalence of anti-asthma preparations (section 6) are particularly well written. The report provides information that will be useful to the newcomer and to those already involved in the design and carrying-out of clinical trials in asthma. There is some repetition, particularly in the sections on the safety and efficacy of bronchodilator drugs (section 7) and disease-modifying drugs (section 8), which could have been accommodated in one section. Each section concludes with recommendations for future conduct of that aspect of research, but these are brief and in some sections, too general. Considering the remit of the panel, more comprehensive recommendations would have been appropriate.

The report does have some limitations, particularly for those actively involved in setting up and running clinical trials. The general nature of the sections on trial design fail to address some specific concerns in sufficient detail. For example, trial design (parallel group, cross-over design) are discussed briefly but considering the importance of design and choice of the type best suited to answering different hypotheses, expansion of this section would have been helpful. The same is true for the inclusion of inhaled steroid withdrawal to create symptomatic asthma in trial design, an issue much debated. The section on special patient groups, such as the use of women of child-bearing potential, always a limiting factor in recruitment, could have been expanded and recommendations for their place in trials given.

Despite these minor criticisms, the report does cover its stated aims and should be recommended reading for anyone undertaking research into anti-asthma drugs.

L. Kuitert